

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CU-02 SY-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 /067 W

-----120250Z 010348 /73

R 111510Z FEB 77

FM AMEMBASSY BAMA KO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5712

INFO USIA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, ML

SUBJECT: STUDENT STRIKE IN BAMA KO

REF: BAMA KO 0557

1. STUDENTS IN BAMA KO, AFTER A THREE-DAY STRIKE, WON CONCESSIONS FROM MALIAN GOVERNMENT FEBRUARY 9 AND RETURNED TO THEIR CLASSES FEBRUARY 10. STUDENT PROTEST ORGANIZED AT ELITE ASKIA MOHAMED SECONDARY SCHOOL FEBRUARY 6 TURNED INTO CITY-WIDE SCHOOL STRIKE FEBRUARY 7 AND 8 AND ERUPTED INTO ROCK-THROWING SKIRMISHES WITH POLICE ON FEBRUARY 9.

2. STUDENTS' MAIN TARGET WAS GOM'S NEW PROCEDURE FOR ENTRANCE TO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION. UNTIL
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1970, ALL STUDENTS WHO EARNED BACCALAUREATE WERE GUARANTEED ADMISSION TO A MALIAN INSTITUTE OF HIGHER EDUCATION. SINCE THEN, GOM HAS GRADUALLY ESTABLISHED COMPETITIVE EXAMS FOR ADMISSION TO MORE PRESTIGIOUS INSTITUTES. FOR 1977, GOVERNMENT PROPOSED TO GIVE, ON SAME DAY, ENTRANCE EXAMS FOR ALL HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTES AND ALL SCHOLARSHIPS ABROAD. STUDENTS FELT

THAT NEW PROCEDURE NOT ONLY REDUCED CHANCES FOR ENTRANCE BY ALLOWING ONLY SINGLE EXAMINATION OPPORTUNITY BUT ALSO IN SOME UNDEFINED WAY INCREASED POSSIBILITY OF POLITICAL INFLUENCE OVER SELECTION PROCESS.

3. AS TENSIONS BUILT DURING LAST THREE DAYS, STUDENTS MILLED ABOUT SCHOOL AREAS AND JEERED AT RIOT POLICE WHO TRIED TO CLOSE DOWN CAMPUSES. MID-MORNING FEBRUARY 9, STUDENTS VANDALIZED GOVERNMENT STORE ACROSS NIGER RIVER, BLOCKED MAIN BRIDGE, AND STONED VEHICLES. ARMED PARATROPPERS MOVED INTO TOWN TO CLEAR TRAFFIC ARTERIES. BY MID-DAY, MALIAN ARMED FORCES, UNDER PERSONAL SUPERVISION OF SECURITY CHIEF BAGAYOKO, HAD RESTORED ORDER. RUMOR HAS IT THAT TWO STUDENTS WERE KILLED AND SEVERAL STUDENTS AND ONE POLICEMAN BEATEN OVER THREE-DAY PERIOD.

4. VICE PRESIDENT BABA DIARRA AND OTHER KEY MINISTERS HELD THREE-HOUR DIALOGUE WITH STUDENTS, PARENTS, AND TEACHERS' UNION REPRESENTATIVES IN MASS MEETING AFTERNOON OF FEBRUARY 9. GOVERNMENT PROMISED TO STAGGER EXAMINATION DATES AND BROADEN RANGE OF SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS. REPORTEDLY, GOVERNMENT ALSO PROMISED TO RECONSIDER ITS DECISION NOT TO HIRE GRADUATES WHO DO NOT GO ON TO HIGHER EDUCATION. STUDENT UNION PUBLISHED COMMUNIQUE ASKING STUDENTS TO RETURN TO CLASSES.

5. MORNING OF FEBRUARY 10, HOWEVER, JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS REPORTEDLY RANSACKED ANOTHER GOVERNMENT STORE IN OUT-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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LYING BAMA KO SUBURB. STUDENT UNION ISSUED PROCLAMATION DISOWNING STUDENTS WHO DID NOT RETURN TO SCHOOL BUT TURNED INSTEAD TO BANDITRY. IN LAST 24 HOURS, GOVERNMENT HAS ARRESTED SEVERAL KEY STUDENT LEADERS OR EXPELLED THEM FROM SCHOOL. WHILE MANY STUDENTS ARE NOT SATISFIED WITH AGREEMENT REACHED IN FEBRUARY 9 MEETING, MOST HAVE RETURNED TO CLASS.

6. MALIAN GOVERNMENT HAS CONTROLLED AND PERHAPS DEFUSED EXPLOSIVE SITUATION BEFORE FEBRUARY 13 ARRIVAL OF FRENCH PRESIDENT. NEVERTHELESS, STUDENTS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED EXCITEMENT OF STREET POLITICS MAY STAGE ANOTHER PROTEST DURING GISCARD'S VISIT TO EMBARRASS GOVERNMENT AND HIGHLIGHT THEIR CLAIM TO HIGHER EDUCATION.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS, BOYCOTTS, CIVIL DISORDERS, POLITICAL CONCESSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 11-Feb-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BAMAKO00591
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770050-0531
Format: TEL
From: BAMAKO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770251/aaaabtif.tel
Line Count: 113
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 9f00f6c7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 BAMAKO 557
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3347984
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: STUDENT STRIKE IN BAMAKO
TAGS: PINS, ML
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/9f00f6c7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009